

## Meeting Summary

### **RURAL LEVEE REPAIR CRITERIA WORKGROUP MEETING #1 California Department of Water Resources, JOC Room LL20 May 7, 2013; 8:30am to 12:00 pm**

#### **Summary of Action Items**

1. DWR will create a doodle poll to schedule the meeting(s) in June.
2. DWR, with workgroup members, will develop a glossary of terms that includes but is not limited to definitions of the following:
  - Improvement
  - Rural levee
  - Level of Work
  - Grouting
  - Set back levee
3. DWR will compile a list of available funding programs.
4. DWR will compile regulatory requirements.
5. DWR will obtain input on potential key repair problem areas and alternatives matrix from workgroup members.
6. Volunteer workgroup members will be consulted on development of early draft alternative descriptions and repair templates to be developed.
7. CCP will send notes of today's meeting next week with information on the May 23<sup>rd</sup> next meeting agenda and details.

#### **Welcome and Introductions**

Meeting Facilitator Adam Sutkus (Center for Collaborative Policy) welcomed members and interested parties to the meeting and led introductions around the room. Mr. Sutkus noted the distinction between workgroup members and interested parties.

- Interested parties are invited to comment at designated times throughout the meeting but general discussions are limited to the workgroup members.

#### **DWR welcome and opening remarks**

Dave Wheeldon (Department of Water Resources; lead of the work group) welcomed the workgroup participants and provided an overview and context to the workgroup.

- The workgroup is composed of diverse experience of NGO/consultants/DWR personnel/USACE to help get work done.
- The workgroup may find it difficult to obtain consensus but the process is designed to support the discussion.

- To extent possible, DWR hopes that members will be willing to take on some sections/assignments to help move this process forward.

Mr. Wheeldon continued the overview and provided background information for the RLRC work:

- The CVFPP was developed and approved by the Board. The plan identifies a need for standards in place to bring levees back to safe conditions.
- The plan did not establish a specific targeted level of flood protection for rural and agricultural areas. Therefore, it was not intended to have this criteria establish a rural levee design criteria. Rather, the criteria are needed primarily to address maintenance-related problems in rural levees, and bring them back to original design level.
- The group was formed in response to Board's resolution for adopting the 2012 CVFPP that calls for draft criteria by July 2013. Through the past Coordinating Committee meeting discussion, Board asked DWR to organize this work group for criteria development.
- A July completion deadline is not feasible, but the goal is to have a draft to present the Board by July. To help achieve this goal, DWR has done some work to begin the process.
- The first goal of the workgroup is to agree on the scope of criteria, language of the charter, and the guiding principles.

Joe Countryman (Board member) was invited to provide opening remarks. Mr. Countryman provided the following comments:

- The Board is very interested in this work.
- Workgroup members should remain flexible and open minded as the work proceeds through this process.
- The development of the criteria is not a simple task. The criteria does not resolve all the problems and concerns associated with rural levees, but we would like this be part of the solutions and move things forward.

## **Agenda and Process Review**

Mr. Sutkus reviewed the overall process, meeting agenda, and the collaborative process. Each participant was provided with a folder containing: a workbook, evaluation sheet, a collaborative reference guide, power point presentation, and blank alternative templates.

### Components of the process:

- Definitional work: problem areas/alternatives need to be identified and defined.
- DWR has done some pre-work to get the process started but the materials can be enhanced, deleted, or revised.
- The most important thing is to first agree on scope and direction. The details of the criteria will follow.

## Framing the Project: Scope and Approach

Mr. Sutkus reviewed the work plan and timeline for this process. The discussion focused on the role of the workgroup and timing for completing the criteria.

- The Board originally expected the criteria to be completed in July, 2013.
- The current goal is to have a draft by July that can be refined later in the summer.
- The workgroup is encouraged to provide feedback on the schedule.
- The process includes work to be completed by workgroup members and DWR staff between meetings.
- The criteria product should account for everyone's input.
- The workgroup is set up as advisory group as required by Board resolution. The workgroup will provide recommendation and DWR is responsible for drafting the criteria.
- It was unclear if the Board would be the authority to "approve" the criteria.
- All issues will be documented and noted. Issues that the group cannot reach consensus on or that are not adopted into the criteria will be included as an addendum.

Workgroup members asked for clarification and commented on the process:

- *The design team to support this process includes DWR/MWH/CCP. Others, including Dave Wheeldon, Ric Rienhardt, Lewis Bair and John Cain helped draft the charter.*
- *The work plan indicates an aggressive schedule and will need to be scheduled in advance.*
- *It is important to focus on framing and how the criteria will be used as well as its effects on funding and different uses.*
- *The difference between the rural criteria and the urban criteria needs to be clarified and communicated widely.*

Workgroup members also began a discussion about the scope of the rural levee criteria. There were different opinions regarding design improvements and level of flood protection. Some members suggested that the focus of the criteria is not on improvement and therefore should not focus on establishing a specific level of flood protection. Alternatively, some members stressed that in considering repairs, it should not be just cosmetic, but consider bringing levees to original design conditions. It was recognized that there are difficulties associated with specific design parameters.

A member asked for clarification on the need to consider the 'improvement' component of the resolution and the coordinating committee's consent to focus on repair. Mr. Countryman noted that the Board did not intend for the existing level of protection to increase for rural areas. There were further comments from the workgroup members on the distinction between 'improvement' and 'repair':

- *Rural levees are not 'one size fits all' and criteria requirements can be expensive.*
- *Focusing on the repair component of the resolution is needed to keep the system functioning and to prevent conditions from getting worse.*

- *There was a suggestion to revisit the word ‘repair’ and replace it with ‘restoration’ (to original design).*

Mr. Wheeldon clarified that the focus of the criteria is to identify acceptable ways to handle repair and move forward quickly. The criteria can be structured as a template to help identify repair options.

Additional comments from the members included:

- *A member questioned why a levee that did not work the first time should be fixed?*
- *In developing the criteria it is important not to focus just on cosmetic repair.*
- *Trying to restore to existing conditions may be very costly if the intent is to fix a weak link to match the rest of the system.*
- *Levees with deficiencies that fail need to be brought to existing standards.*
- *Criteria should be developed to focus on safety.*

## Pre-Meeting Assessment Review

Mr. Sutkus reviewed key points from pre-meeting conversations with workgroup members and asked for comments and clarifications from the workgroup members. In general, members support this process but had some key concerns:

### Liability:

- *There is a liability issue when repairs are done to levees that are known to have a defect. It is therefore difficult to ignore current standards.*
- *Need to consider intended standard of care.*

### Design considerations

- *The project will not address the real levee issue if we don’t consider design.*
- *The criteria are only intended to be part of larger work that is done on rural levees.*

### LMA implementation

- *A one size fits all approach is a problem. Each district has different interests in being proactive and limiting expenditures.*
- *It is important to consider how to motivate and obtain participation from diverse districts.*
- *There was a question regarding the interactions and collaboration among the RDs. DWR needs to lead a top down effort, provide outreach, and incentivize with money.*
- *Project and non-project levees require different standards.*

Mr. Wheeldon reviewed the FSRP program. The RLRC can be used directly in the FSRP program—they are intertwined and will assist each other as implementation begins.

Mr. Sutkus reviewed the charter and asked for input from the workgroup members. Mr. Sutkus clarified that the charter can be modified and updated with everyone’s approval. Mr. Wheeldon stated that the intent of RLRC is to ultimately be statewide but it should be part of the scope discussion. The workgroup members continued to comment on the charter and scope:

- *Unlike the urban criteria, the RLRC is intended to remain a criteria and not legislation.*
- *RLRC is intended to be used by DWR and all levee maintainers.*
- *The scenarios in which the criteria can be applied need to be clarified.*
- *The RLRC work is suited as best practices rather than criteria.*
- *Additional discussion is needed on how to integrate project/non-project levees and how to deal with non-project repairs that affect the system.*
- *The 1<sup>st</sup> purpose of criteria may be to create a tool box for rural districts to use with/without permitting. That purpose is applicable statewide. A secondary purpose may be for state funding priority criteria. These two purposes need to be kept separate.*

## Planning Framework

Mr. Wheeldon reviewed the planning framework document and solicited input from the workgroup. The planning framework includes seven guidelines to help define the criteria scope. The following are general comments from the workgroup members:

- *Defining normal conditions should be based on the original system in place. Restoring damaged areas should be based on these normal conditions and with intent to restore to the existing system conditions.*
- *The level of protection definition needs to be simplified.*
- *Repair options needs to be simple and manageable.*
- *The 408 permit process is confusing. There is a distinction between minor and major permits. In general, routine maintenance that can be found in the O&M manual does not require a permit but any other work requires a 408 permitting process. Any work on federal levees must be approved by USACE.*
  - *Major408 permit requires a DC approval: document the impact on level of protection, impact on the river, and levee height.*
  - *Minor408 permit is based on no changes to hydraulics/protection level, and is managed by the district.*
- *Current permitting requirements keep RDs from doing some minor repairs. The reality of RD limited resources needs to be considered. The USACE is overburdened. Does the USACE have flexibility to apply the templates to meet USACE requirements and move the process along? Can we have a pre-approval process for specific options where a 'suite' of simple and common repairs that may fall into the minor category may be able to be agreed to in advance?*

**Based on the discussion, Item no. #6 in the Planning Framework will be revised to read:**  
**"Rural levee repair criteria will not define a specific level of flood protection requirement for rural levees."**

## Conceptual model

The conceptual model was introduced as a matrix that summarizes potential problem areas and repair alternatives. A template for each alternative repair in a guidebook/menu format is

envisioned to help RDs reference methods to address common problems that can be flexibly applied locally. This manual format can be developed for alternatives that do not require major 408 permits. The group was asked to comment on the matrix and help revise it.

**Changes to the Matrix were noted and will be provided separately.**

The workgroup members discussed the importance of identifying alternatives/projects that will/will not trigger the 408 major permit process. Members discussed key repair problems and potential alternatives to be included in the matrix. Key issues that were brought up included:

- *There were disagreements on the need to include erosion. Although erosion is a problem, it is commonly addressed by RD and does not need further direction. Depression in top of levee is the weakest part.*
- *Relief wells can be a key repair problem or a repair alternative. Existing wells that require repairs need to be identified.*
- *The focus and limits of the matrix need to be established.*

Mr. Wheeldon acknowledged that although the criteria are independent of funding and programs, funding will determine some of these decisions. However, for the purpose of creating the criteria, funding should be excluded as a defining factor.

Mr. Wheeldon said that the criteria will defer to other guidance and only work on what needs further elaboration. A member asked if repair projects get approved by the Board and Mr. Countryman answered that the Board will not approve anything that the USACE will not approve. Other comments on the matrix included:

- *The criteria should identify how to proceed with different levels of work (no permit/minor 408 permit/major 408 permit). This will be a focus area for the next meeting.*
- *There are some similarities between standards applied at urban levee and non-urban levee evaluations. There are several types of repairs that lend themselves to be used as references for this project without 're-creating the wheel'.*

Mr. Sutkus asked workgroup members for help with future work on specific repair alternative templates. The following members volunteered:

*Les Harder, Gilbert Cosio, RicReinhard, Steve Sullivan, Graham Bradner, Lewis Bair, Dave Mraz*

Mr. Sutkus thanked all the meeting participants for attending the meeting and offering their input and support to the process and acknowledged the progress accomplished today by the work group.

## **Summary of Next Steps**

- Workgroup members will be provided with the RLRC Problems and Repair Alternatives Matrix for review in preparation for the next meeting.
- The DWR Design Team will be compiling information on: glossary of terms, available funding programs, and regulatory requirements.

- Workgroup members, who volunteered to help, will be contacted and provided with repair alternatives templates for review.

**Next meeting will be on Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> 1:00pm- 4:30pm.**

## **Attendance**

1. Lewis Bair, RD 108
2. Graham Bradner, GEI Consultants
3. Stacy Cepello , DWR-FESSRO
4. Wen Chen, NV5, Inc.
5. Gilbert Cosio , MBK Engineers
6. Joe Countryman , CVFPB, Board Member
7. Leslie Harder, Jr., HDR Engineering, Inc.
8. Reggie Hill, Lower San Joaquin Levee District
9. Scott R. Huntsman, Black & Veatch Corporation
10. Gilbert Labrie, DCC Engineering
11. Ryan Larson, USACE
12. Dave Mraz, DWR-FESSRO
13. Barry O'Regan, Peterson Brustad, Inc.
14. Mary Perlea, USACE
15. Dave Peterson, Peterson Brustad, Inc.
16. Ali Porbaha, CVFPB
17. Ric Reinhardt, MBK Engineering
18. Julie Rentner, River Partners / RD 2092
19. Max Sakato, RD 1500
20. Ran Singh, DWR-FMO
21. Steven Stadler, Kings River Conservation District
22. Rune Storesund, Storesund Consulting
23. Steven Sullivan, Mead & Hunt, Inc.
24. Kevin R. Tillis, Hultren-Tillis Engineers

## **Project Team**

25. Dave Wheeldon, DWR-FMO
26. Syada Ara, DWR-FMO
27. Yung-Hsin Sun, MWH Americas, Inc.
28. Mary Jimenez, MWH Americas, Inc.

## **Facilitation Team**

29. Adam Sutkus, CCP
30. Orit Kalman, CCP